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AUTHOR Reddy, S. K.
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ABSTRACT

The problems faced by 3 rural communities in Mississippi are identified, and their development programs are analyzed. Data were collected from 3 nonmetropolitan, multicounty centers, located in 3 distinct geographic regions of Mississippi. The 3 major analytical and data collecting concepts used were actions or programs; associations, organizations, and groups; and actors, community participants or leaders, following the interactional conception of community. The communities were described in terms of demographic characteristics, problems facing the community, and development programs. The 2 dimensions of community participation considered were the scope and extent of participation in development programs. It was determined that the most important agency for coordinating development programs in all 3 communities was the local Chamber of Commerce and that good communities are made possible by the willingness of people and their leaders to face challenges and create for themselves what they need. It was suggested that factors like leadership structure, strategy of program development, style of action, and relationships between community organizations need to be taken into account in explaining the success of development programs in some communities and failure in others. (PS)

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PROGRAMS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT:

A Comparative Study of Three Mississippi Multicounty Centers

S. K. Reddy*

The rapid changes in rural and urban areas in recent years have focused attention on rural development resulting in the Rural Development Act of 1972. The action was stimulated by the growing concern of scientists, specialists, and leadership to discourage migration of rural population to ever increasing metropolitan centers causing severe stress and strain on metropolitan resources. The reasons attributed to the movement from rural to urban areas were: displacement of farm labor due to the rapid farm mechanization, lack of opportunity for gainful employment, lack of adequate housing and other services in rural areas. It is these factors which cause people to leave their homesteads to settle in places which not only provide various services but also opportunities for employment. Solution of these problems is contingent upon the efforts to make rural communities better places in which to live and work. This is sought to be achieved through rural development. The purpose of rural development "is to create job opportunities, community services, a better quality of living, and an improved social and physical environment in the small cities, towns, villages, and farm communities in rural America." [1]

If the rural development programs are to be effective, there is an urgent need for research based information on problems specific to individual communities and the nature and type of programs that are currently initiated by various communities. The purpose of this paper is to identify the problems faced by three rural communities in Mississippi and to identify and analyze the nature of development programs.

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*Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, Dept. of Sociology and Rural Life, Mississippi State University.

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[1] U. S. President's Task Force on Rural Development. "A New Life for the Country: The Report of the President's Task Force on Rural Development." Washington, D. C., Government Printing Office, 1970.

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Data Collection

The data were collected from three nonmetropolitan multicounty centers, located in three distinct geographic regions of Mississippi. These were Oakville[1] (North Mississippi); Dayton (South Mississippi); and Farmington (Mississippi Delta). Each of these communities was between 20,000 and 22,000 in population and present a broad range of development programs and problems which are relevant in the context of rural development.

The major analytical and data collecting concepts used were (1) actions or programs, (2) associations, organizations, and groups, and (3) actors, community participants or leaders, following the interactional or "action" conception of community.[2]

The first step in the field work was ennumeration of community programs and organizations. This was accomplished in three distinct ways. The researchers personally interviewed in each community six to eight key informants and community knowledgeables such as mayor, aldermen, presidents, and secretaries of Chamber of Commerce, newspaper editors, and agency directors to elicit information on major programs, actors, and associations participating in each program. A one-page field instrument called "Survey of Programs, Organizations, and Problems" schedule was used with various civic groups in the community such as Rotary, Lions, Civitan, Kiwanis, and Exchange Clubs. Two other schedules were also used on leaders and key informants. One secured the usual background information, data on formal participation and community support index. The second schedule dealt with participant involvement in each of the actions in which he was associated.

Community programs were also ennumerated by scanning local newspapers. This methos supplemented the information obtained from the above methods.

Background of Study Communities

The three study communities, namely Oakville, Dayton, and Farmington, present a broad range of problems and prospects of rural development in Mississippi. These are essentially nonmetropolitan, multicounty trade

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[1]The names of three communities are pseudonyms.

[2]Kaufman, Harold F., and Wilkinson, Kenneth P., "Community Structure and Leadership," An interactional perspective in the study of community. Mississippi State University, Social Science Research Center, Bulletin 13, June, 1967. Also see Kaufman, Harold F., "Toward an Interactional Conception of Community," Social Forces, Vol. 38 (Oct., 1959).

areas of the regions in which they are located. Selected demographic characters of the three communities which have an important bearing on the observations reported in this study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Selected Demographic Characteristics of Study Communities.*

	Oakville	Dayton	Farmington
1. Total Population	20,471	19,704	21,673
2. % non-whites	17.6	51.0	54.6
3. Median Income	8,436	6,331	5,864
4. % Families with Income less than poverty level	12.5	31.4	31.2
5. Civilian Labor Force % unemployed	1.9	5.6	6.3
6. Nonworker/Worker Ratio	1.29	1.79	1.89
7. Median School Years completed (per 25 years)	12.3	11.2	10.2

*Source: 1970 Census.

Of the three study communities, Oakville has a higher level of development compared to Dayton and Farmington. Oakville has moved in the last 10 years successfully from a medium sized farm based economy to an industrial economy. The displaced farm labor has been successfully absorbed in the local industrial plants. The economy of Farmington is largely dependent on cotton farming. Mechanization of cotton farming operations resulted in large scale displacement of farm labor. Resistance of community to industrialize in the 60's resulted in large scale migration of displaced farm labor. The labor force that did not migrate remained largely unemployed or underemployed, mostly depending upon welfare programs. Dayton also has a similar situation like Farmington. In addition to farm based economy, there are a few large industries based on timber and oil.

An important factor in the three communities is the proportion of nonwhites comprising mostly of black population. While they form 17 percent of the total population in Oakville, proportion of blacks in Dayton and Farmington is slightly above fifty percent.

Median income is lowest in Farmington, followed by Dayton and Oakville. Median income of Oakville is far above the level of median income of State of Mississippi which is $6071. Also one third of the total number of families in Dayton and Farmington have incomes of less than poverty level.

Unemployment figures of Dayton and Farmington are also high, with 5.6 percent of civilian labor force in Dayton and 6.2 percent in Farmington unemployed, compared to 1.9 in Oakville. Now worker to worker ratio is 1.29 in Oakville compared to 1.79 in Dayton and 1.89 in Farmington.

Median school years completed by population over 25 years of age is higher in Oakville compared to that of Dayton and Farmington.

The favorable situation noted in Oakville, apart from other factors, is the result of development efforts taking place in the community during the last fifteen years.

Problems Facing the Community

The responses of Civic Club members about the problems facing the community were analyzed. The number and type of problems identified in each of the three communities are presented below.

Community	No. of Problems Identified	No. of Problems Mentioned 3 or More Times
Oakville	20	10
Dayton	20	13
Farmington	26	14

The problems faced by the three communities are somewhat different depending on the community's background and level of development. The major problems facing each community are presented below.

Major Problems Facing the Community

Oakville	Dayton	Farmington
Improvement of Traffic Highways	Lack of Transportation (Air, Rail, and Road)	Education & school Integration
	Improvement of Streets	Unemployment

(Cont'd.)

Oakville	Dayton	Farmington
Housing	Lack of Industrial Growth	Lack of Industry
Improvement of air-rail transport	Lack of Leadership and Community Attitude	Drugs and Juvenile Crime
Improvement of Streets	Lack of Recreational Facilities	Poor Housing
Development of Quality Education	Lack of Proper Housing	Lack of Good Community Relations
Drugs Among Teenagers	Lack of Cooperation among Races	Race Relations
Downtown Deterioration	Juvenile Delinquency	Untrained Labor Force
Labor Shortage	Economic Stagnation	Downtown Development
Pollution and ecological Improvement	Education and School Integration	Lack of Recreational Facilities
	Sewage Disposal	Lack of Health Facilities
	Lack of finances for City Development	Street Improvement
	High Taxes	Low Income Level
		Economic Development

A closer examination of problems faced by each of the communities shows that the problems faced by Oakville can be termed as "second generation" problems resulting from industrial development such as labor shortage; need for better paid jobs rather than "any jobs"; environmental pollution; need for better rail and air transport; highways to link with bigger industrial and commercial centers; speedier movement of traffic within the community; improvement in the quality of education and environment.

The problems faced by Dayton and Farmington seemed to be more basic relating to lack of industry, unemployment, lack of leadership, problems of race relations, lack of public facilities and services relating to health, housing, and recreation.

The problem of education as seen by respondents in three communities is again different. While Oakville's problem is that of creating facilities

for higher education* and improving the quality of education, the problem in Dayton and more so in Farmington is that of adjusting to the changed circumstances of integrated schools. The problems of Dayton and Farmington are to be judged against the population composition (where nearly 50 percent are blacks) and modernized farming systems resulting in large scale displacement of farm labor which is unlettered and unskilled for industrial employment.

Development Programs

A number of development programs were identified in each of the three communities. These are classified according to the major interest area served by the program and are shown below.

	Communities		
Interest Area	Oakville	Dayton	Farmington
Community Wide	7	3	6
Public Facilities	7	12	3
Ag. & Natural Resources	3	-	-
Industry, Trade, & Services	8	4	3
Education	7	3	3
Health	4	3	3
Welfare	5	3	3
Housing & Urban Renewal	1	2	2
Recreation & Arts	8	5	4
Total	50	35	27

*Oakville has limitations on expanding higher educational facilities due to the existence of two major state universities with a fifty mile radius and a junior college within a ten mile radius.

Specific programs in each of the three communities are presented in Table 2. Each of these communities has at least one or more programs in each interest area except agriculture and natural resources. However, Oakville has much greater volume of activity and community participation as will be shown elsewhere in this paper. Also programs are more comprehensive and have been in existence at least during the last two years and there is a general concensus about their favorable impact on the community. Industrial development has been the major concern during the last 15 years with improvement of education, health, and the arts now being the major concern.

The emphasis in Dayton is on industrial and trade promotion. Programs in other areas of community life are of recent origin whose impact is yet to be felt in the community. A highly important action in Dayton has been that of revitalization of Chamber of Commerce and its development of strong cooperative relations with the city and county governments. This single action has set in motion a number of programs and actions in the community, in which the Chamber of Commerce, city and county governments, and other local organizations participate.

The main emphasis in Farmington, like Dayton, is on programs concerned with industrial and trade promotion and employment. The key action in Farmington had been change in the form and structure of city government. The city has recently reorganized its government to have a full-time mayor and competent men to run its various departments. This action has brought in new leadership committed to industrialization and growth of community. The effect of this action was the establishment of closer links between various organizations in the community and creation of grassroot climate for development of the community.

Table 2. Classification of Programs by Interest Areas

Oakville	Dayton	Farmington
Community Wide		
Community Development Foundation	Revitalization of C of C	Coordination Between City-County Gov'ts.
Council of Governments	Part. of Blacks in Decision-Making Bodies	Change in Charter and form of City Gov't.
Mayor's Advisory Council	Community Relations Comm.	North Delta Economic & Development District
CDF-Promotion Committee		Chamber of Commerce
City Beautification Commission		Bi-Racial Committee
Palmetto Day Care Center		County Unit System of Government
Public Facilities and Services		
CDF-Highway Comm.	Planning Commission	City Planning Comm.
CDF-Transportation Committee	Anti-Litter Committee (C of C)	Civil Defense
Highways-Our Pressing Emergency	Port Development	Sewage Plant
CDF-Airport Comm.	Convention Dev. Comm. (C of C)	
Expansion of City Services	Transportation Comm. (C of C)	
Appalachian Road Proj. & By-Pass	Civil Defense	
City Planning Comm.	Street Improvement Prog.	
Law Enforcement	Civic Center	
	Airport Committee	
	New Jail	
	Master Plan	
	Slum Clearance	
Agriculture & Natural Resources		
Rural Community Dev. Council		
Three Rivers Planning Commission		
Tombigbee Water Management Committee		
Industry, Trade, & Services		
Industrial Park Finance Committee	Commercial Development Committee	Industrial Foundation
Industrial Park Operation	Natchez Business & Civic League	Retail Steering Comm.
CDF-Retail Trade Council	Community Mart, Inc.	Downtown Development
	Industrial Foundation	

Oakville	Dayton	Farmington

Industry, Trade, & Services (Cont'd.)

CDF-Industrial Committee
CDF-Industrial Development Committee
Uptown Merchants Association
Community Relations Asso.
Industry Placement Committee (CDF)

Education

Community Service & Continuing Education
Juvenile Prevention Center
Educational Planning Program
Lee County Child Develp. Council
Lee County Library
Follow Through Program
Voc.-Education Jr. College

University of Southern Mississippi-Natchez Branch
Natchez-Adams County School Board
Private School/School Reorganization

Formation of Lee Academy/ School Integration
Coahoma Junior College Vocational Training

Health

North Miss. Medical Center/ Comprehensive Health Plan
Mental Health Asso.
Regional Rehabilitation Center
Alcohol Safety Action Prog.

Hospital Construction & Expansion
Southwest Miss. Comp. Health Prog./McComb
Fluoridation of Water

Coahoma Hospital Expansion
Mental Health Clinic
Drug Program/Education

Welfare

Jobs for Blacks
Lee United Companions
Junior Auxilliary
Lee United Neighbors
LIFT-Comm. Action Agency
Comm. of Concern-Civic Improvement Club

Adams-Jefferson Improvemt. Corp. (AJIC)
Headstart
STAR

Miss. Delta Council for Farm Workers
Coahoma Opportunities, (COI)

Housing

Urban Renewal & Housing

Housing
Urban Renewal

Housing
Urban Renewal

Recreation & Arts

Community Theatre
Park & Recreation Comm.
Community Concert Series

Tourism Comm. of C of C
Recreation

Community Concert Association

Oakville	Dayton	Farmington
	Recreation & Arts (Cont'd.)	
Community Symphony Orchestra	Preservation of Historic Sites: Natchez-Under-the-Hill; Restoration of Jefferson College	Sunflower River Proj.
CDF-Cultural Enrichment Committee	City Beautification Commission	Mini-Parks
Community Chorus	Pilgrimage Garden Club	Miss Clarksdale Pageant
Country Club	Town and County Garden Club	
Junior Olympics		

Sponsorship of development programs

Type of sponsorship of development programs is an indicator of community support and strength. Program sponsorship in the three communities is examined from the point of whether the programs are sponsored by voluntary organizations (nongovernmental sources) or governmental sources. The data is presented below.

Source of Sponsorship

Interest Area	Gov't.			Non-Gov't.		
	Oakville	Dayton	Farmington	Oakville	Dayton	Farmington
1	2	1	2	4	2	2
2	4	8	4	4	4	0
3	2	0	0	1	0	0
4	0	1	1	9	4	2
5	6	2	2	1	1	1
6	4	3	2	0	0	1
7	1	4	2	3	0	1
8	1	2	2	0	0	0
9	1	2	0	7	4	4
All Prog.	21	23	16	29	15	11

It was observed that 58 percent of all the programs were sponsored by nongovernmental agencies in Oakville, while the corresponding figure was 43 percent for Dayton and 40 percent for Farmington. This indicates

greater involvement of voluntary organizations in the development process in Oakville compared to the other two communities. Conversely governments have been the sponsors of majority of programs in the two communities of Dayton and Farmington. Nongovernmental sponsorship of developmental programs in these two communities were mostly in the area of industrial and trade development.

Differences were also observed between the three communities regarding sponsorship and coordination of various development programs by the voluntary organizations. The most important voluntary organizations concerned with development programs in each of these communities are the local Chambers of Commerce. These are in effect the community coordinating structures.

In Oakville the local Chamber of Commerce is called as Community Development Association (CDA) which is comprehensive in terms of program sponsorship. The programs sponsored by CDA range from those related to industrial and trade promotion to rural development, development of health, education and arts, and cultural activities. As such it has a distinct style of sponsorship and coordination. An analysis of the development programs in Oakville indicates three distinct styles of sponsorship. In the first instance CDA creates a committee or sponsors a separate agency and continues to give support to the new agency. In a second approach CDA sponsors a program directly and then stimulates it to become an autonomous agency. Yet in a third approach CDA encourages its members to take part in initial organizational efforts of new programs which are not directly supported and sponsored by CDA. Each of these styles of sponsorship are important in the coordination of development programs in the community.

The style of coordination followed by Chamber of Commerce in Dayton is through a system of committees and task forces. The committees and task forces serve as rallying points for coordinating the efforts of various individuals, groups, and organizations in the community. Once the objective has been obtained the task forces are dissolved.

The style of coordination followed by the Chamber of Commerce in Farmington is primarily through a system of committees. The operation of Chamber of Commerce in Farmington is limited to programs directly related to industrial and trade promotion. In view of the limited scope of programs sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce in Farmington, coordination through the committees seems to meet the needs of the situation.

The nature of sponsorship and coordination noted in the three communities indicates that each community has to develop its own methods of sponsorship and coordination depending on the comprehensiveness of programs it sponsors. The style of coordination also seems to be an important factor in the participation of various community groups and interests in the development programs.

Community Participation in Programs

Development programs succeed to the extent people participate in them directly or indirectly through their leaders. A sense of participation is essential not only from a tangible consideration of program success but from the more important consideration of developing a feeling of community among the members. Participation is essential if the programs are to be geared to the needs of the community.

Two dimensions of community participation considered in this section are the scope and extent of participation in development programs. Scope of participation is measured in terms of number of interest areas in which respondents participated. Extent of participation is measured in terms of number of programs in which respondents participated. While the extent of participation is important from the point of broad based support to development efforts, scope of participation is important from the point of coordinating processes in the community.

The data on community participation in programs is presented in Table 3. It was observed that participation of respondents, as well as leaders, in Oakville was much higher both in scope and extent compared to Dayton and Farmington. This perhaps is a factor in the better coordination of programs observed in Oakville.

Table 3. Extent of Participation of Leaders & Others in Development Programs.

	Oakville	Dayton	Farmington
No. of Respondents	71	71	96
No. of Leaders	21	19	26
No. of Programs	50	35	27
No. of Interest Areas	9	8	8
Av. No. of Actions per Interest Areas	5.5	4.3	3.3
Av. No. of programs per Respondent	4.8	2.7	2.7
Av. No. of Interest Areas per Respondent	3.8	2.0	2.1
Av. No. of Programs per Leader	9.3	5.7	4.4
Av. No. of Interest Areas per Leader	5.1	4.0	3.4

The number of leaders and others in a community participating in programs across the interest areas seems to be an important factor in the coordinative efforts in a community. However, the present data is not sufficient to draw a definite conclusion.

Summary

A number of development programs have been identified in the three study communities; 50 in Oakville, 35 in Dayton, and 27 in Farmington. At least one program was identified in each of the interest areas in all three communities. However, number of programs and number of participants observed in the three communities indicated greater volume of development activity and wider participation of community in Oakville compared to Dayton and Farmington. Programs in Oakville are more comprehensive and most of them have been in existence for at least three years. Most of the programs, in Dayton and Farmington, are of recent origin whose impact is yet to be felt.

Nongovernment, voluntary agencies are the sponsors of majority of development programs in Oakville while local governments sponsored majority of development programs in Dayton and Farmington.

The most important agency for coordinating development programs in all the three communities is the local Chambers of Commerce. While the Chamber of Commerce in Oakville is comprehensive to include various interests, Chambers of Commerce in Dayton and Farmington are less comprehensive, mainly oriented towards development of trade and industry.

The elaborate system of program sponsorship and support to various organizations extended by the Development Association in Oakville has been at the base of comprehensive, well coordinated and integrated programs found in Oakville. The sponsorship and support to other programs and agencies by the Chambers of Commerce in Dayton and Farmington have been less comprehensive.

In all the three communities strong cooperative relationships exist between the local Chambers of Commerce, the city and county governments. This relationship has been successfully utilized in Oakville to coordinate and integrate development efforts. In Dayton and Farmington there is a great deal of scope to utilize this relationship as an instrument for integrated development efforts.

The observations noted above are to be viewed against the background of each community. Oakville had obvious advantages like low proportion of nonwhite population, better resources and leadership. The problems of Dayton and Farmington are those of very high proportion of nonwhites, background of racial tension, low resource base due to incidence of unemployment and high proportion of families with incomes below poverty level. The recent developments in the two communities indicate a trend towards greater awareness and need for development. Various actions taken by these two communities to reorganize their institutions, to industrialize, and to develop physical and social resources have created a grassroot climate favorable to development.

For those concerned with rural development like planners, social scientists, and change agents, these three communities offer both challenge and opportunity to understand the social context in which development takes place. The observations pertaining to Oakville indicate that good communities are not gifts of benevolent governments or made possible by the abundance of resources, but it is the willingness of people and their leaders to face challenges and create for themselves what they need.

There are several factors like leadership structure, strategy of program development, style of action, autonomous or coordinated, relationship between community organizations, etc., that need to be taken into account in explaining the success of development programs in some communities and failure in others. Scope of this paper does not permit such elaboration. Future research in rural development must try to address itself to urgent questions like: How can rural community institutions be helped to be more vigorous? What makes a rural community a viable growing center while another declines or at best remains static?

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